

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	Maria Camila Estrada Flórez
Project title	Cooperative breeding patterns of the Red-bellied Grackle (<i>Hypopyrrhus pyrohypogaster</i>) in a highly intervened habitat of the Colombian Andes
RSG reference	10800-1
Reporting period	Jan 2013 – Jul 2013
Amount of grant	£2184
Your email address	steinacleit@gmail.com
Date of this report	August 2013

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Increase knowledge of the red-bellied grackle		x		Although we have described the breeding biology of this species, is still not enough and more research is needed
Describe cooperative behaviour and patterns		x		We have a raw set of data, that needs to be analysed in order to fully achieve this objective
Behaviour in the non breeding season, and how groups are formed	x			Since the breeding season ended a few weeks ago, we're in the process of going to the study area to take notes about this behaviour
Demarcate the breeding territories of the breeding groups		x		As with the description of the cooperative behaviour, we still haven't analyzed the data we obtained in the breeding season

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

The major difficulty we had this year, was the departure of several of the original members of the project, to other countries or to other cities in Colombia. This was problematic, since the accomplishment of our objectives depended of constant field trips to the study area, and the ones that stayed had other responsibilities too. So, in order to maintain our project going, we decided to do an open invitation to have field assistants that would go with us to the study area, and help us with different tasks in the field. We approved the CVs of 6 undergraduate students of biology, really interested in learning about breeding biology, and it was a great solution to our problem.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

The first, and more challenging outcome was that we were able to standardise a methodology to measure the breeding territories of the breeding groups. We haven't analysed our data yet, but it is remarkable that even with just our observations, patterns start to emerge.

Our second outcome is that we were able to band more individuals this year, which helped us during the observation sessions to determine the activities performed by each individual inside the group. The third outcome, even though is not directly related to the project, was the great experience of working with biology students, and witnesses the excitement and wonder they felt as they work with us and learn the real job of us biologists.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

N/A

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Since most of us are doing a masters degree or planning to do one, there aren't any plans to continue this project. We expect that the data we collected the past few years will allow us to better understand the breeding behaviour of this population of red-bellied grackle.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The next step for us is to analyse our data and then to publish our results as a paper, as a way to share our project with the scientific community. With the community in our study area, we are planning to do workshops to share our results, since they are really interested in any progress we have with the red-bellied grackle.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

We started our observations in January this year (2013), since this is when the breeding season of this population starts, and even though the season is over, we haven't stop going, since we want to document how they behave after the breeding season.

The grant covered our transportations expenses this last breeding season, but the project had being going on for the last 8 years. We already have a paper about the first 5 years of the project, and this last year will be part of a 3-year paper about the cooperative breeding shown by these breeding groups.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Travel fees	2184	1870	314	We haven't finished our observations, we plan to go to the study area the rest of the year, as we explained in our grant application
TOTAL	2184	1870	-314	

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

In the future, we would like to do paternity tests (if possible) to determine the relationships between the individuals in a group and between groups. This is an interesting topic, because it will reveal how endogamic this population is, and how vulnerable it is to the fragmentation of the habitat.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

We haven't attended any events this year, so we didn't use the RSGF logo in any material. But in our upcoming paper, we will acknowledge your important part in the development of this project.

11. Any other comments?

We are incredibly thankful to the RSGF, to believe in this project and to ease our monetary burden, which helped us to do a better job. Muchas gracias!

